

THE CANADIAN RAILROAD HISTORICAL ASSN.

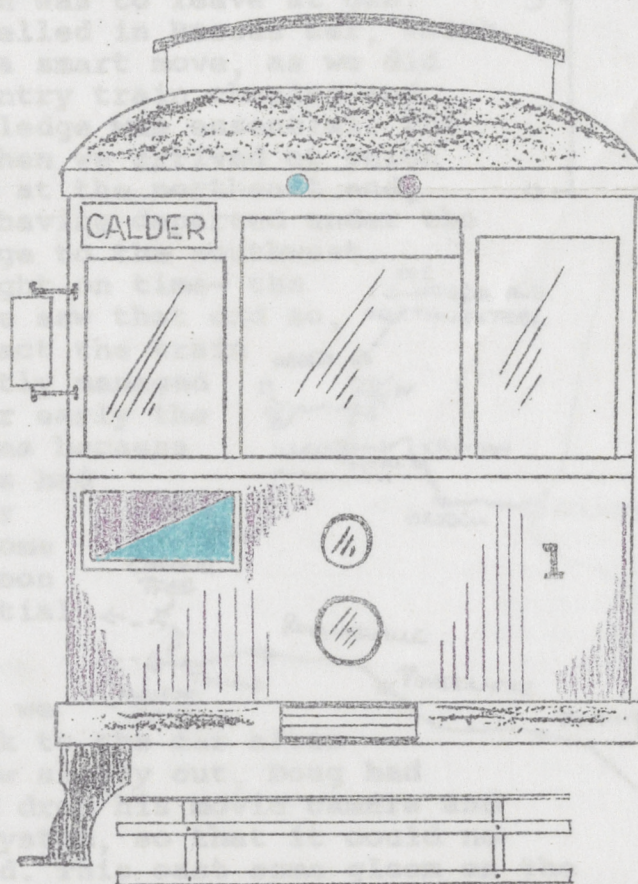
RATTLER



Volume 1 Number 11

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SEASONS GREETINGS



IN SEARCH OF STEAM.....

— Part Three

IN SEARCH OF STEAM

Part 3. The last standard gauge fan trip.

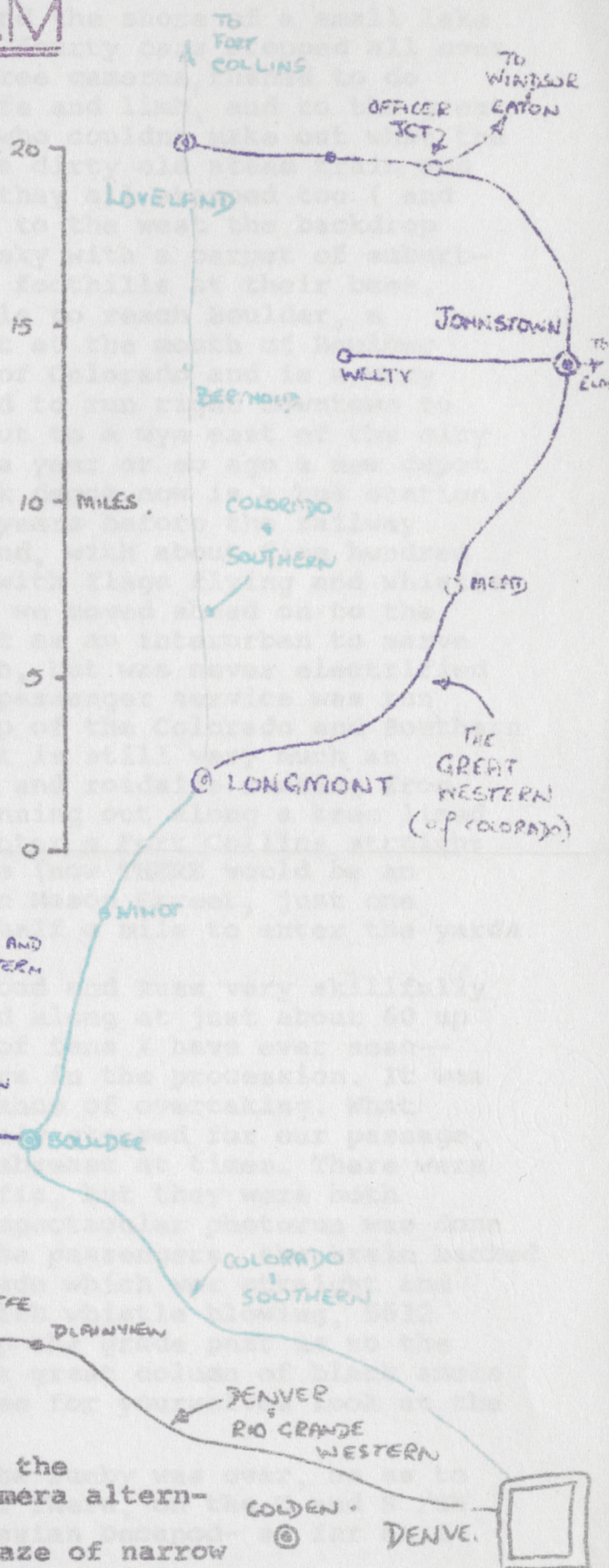
(by Eric Johnson, with Doug McKechnie)

And now at last, we come to our last railfan excursion behind standard gauge steam-- and in many ways this was the most spectacular. To start with, TWO engines were used- the CBQ 4-8-4 No. 5632, from Denver via Boulder to Longmont over the Colorado and Southern and then that rare beast, a 2-10-0 (No.90) belonging to the Great Western. No.90 hauled the enthusiasts over the entire main line of the GW from Longmont to Loveland, where it was replaced by 5632 for the return journey to Denver.

Monday, September 2nd. was another brilliant day and we were up bright and early as the train was to leave at 8am. This time we travelled in Russes car, which turned out to be a smart move, as we did a lot of crosscountry train chasing and expert local knowledge was essential. The train was ready when we arrived at Union Station-this time at the northeast end, the other trains having departed under the 16th. Street bridge to the southwest.

The train left right on time- the only one of all we saw that did so, to be exact. In fact the train was very efficiently managed and ran to time or early the whole day. This was because many of its riders had to leave for their return journeys home during the afternoon and it was essential to make various connections. Unfortunately, as we were hurrying back to the car after watching 5632 draw slowly out, Doug had the misfortune to drop his movie camera and damage the lens system, so that it could no longer be adjusted. This cast some gloom on the days journey and reduced us to using one camera alternately for the rest of the trip.

We took some time to get out of the maze of narrow streets in the station area and on to the Valley Highway, and from that to the Boulder Turnpike, both limited access highways, on which of course no parking or pedestrians were allowed. This was all very well at first, but, about halfway to Boulder, the smoke marking 5632s passage drew near. This was a holiday and the fans were out in strength, and you never saw so many 'broken down' cars on a superhighway in your life !!



At one point, the tracks curved around the shore of a small lake and then under the highway, and here about forty cars stopped all over the shoulders and sixty fans, and eightythree cameras, rushed to do justice to the scene, at great peril to life and limb, and to the great amazement of the more lawabiding citizens who couldn't make out what the fuss was all about. After all it was only a dirty old steam train and who cared.... STEAM TRAIN !!!!!..... so they all stopped too (and some turned around and came with us)! Away to the west the backdrop of Front Range was sharp against the blue sky with a carpet of suburban development almost covering the gentle foothills at their base. The C and S tracks wound through these hills to reach Boulder, a pleasant city nestled at the mountains foot at the mouth of Boulder Creek. This is the home of the University of Colorado and is a very pretty town. The Colorado and Southern used to run right downtown to a brick depot, but this involved backing out to a wye east of the city before the trains could continue. So just a year or so ago a new depot was built out at the wye, and the old brick depot now is a bus station (an unhappy fate it has suffered for many years before the railway moved out). We went to this new station, and, with about five hundred other fans, watched 5632 charge into town with flags flying and whistle blowing. While the train made a short stop we moved ahead on to the Longmont road. This line was actually built as an interurban to serve Fort Collins, some fifty miles to the north, but was never electrified beyond the Denver suburbs. A steam hauled passenger service was run for some time but it soon fell into the lap of the Colorado and Southern and became their main line to the north. It is still very much an interurban line, with rollercoaster grades and roadside running from Boulder to Longmont, which it leaves by running out along a tree lined residential street for almost a mile. It enters a Fort Collins straight across the Colorado State University campus (now THERE would be an ideal place for me to work !) and then down Mason Street, just one block west of the main street, for nearly half a mile to enter the yards at the north end of town.

Anyway, we got out on the Longmont road and Russ very skillfully drove us almost alongside 5632 as she roared along at just about 60 up hill and down. She had the biggest escort of fans I have ever seen-- there must have been at least a hundred cars in the procession. It was a narrow road too, and there was little chance of overtaking. What traffic there was coming the other way wisely stopped for our passage, since the fans were driving two and three abreast at times. There were two police cars out trying to control traffic, but they were both buried in the jam and quite impotent !! A spectacular photorun was done along this track- after dropping most of the passengers, the train backed up for at least half a mile down a long grade which was straight and about 2%, so far as I could judge. Then, with whistle blowing, 5632 stormed (and stormed IS the right word) up the grade past us to the delight of all. It was a wonderful sight- a great column of black smoke and the mountains beyond ---if you would see for yourselves look at the picture in the last issue.

Once again, we hurried ahead, once the runby was over, so as to get into Longmont yards ahead of the train. There, on the C and S /GW interchange stood Great Westerns famous Russian Decapod- so far as I know the last survivor of these engines. After admiring her, and with nostalgic thoughts of our own Northern Alberta 2-10-0s, we watched 5632 steam into the yard, stop, cutoff and run forward past No. 90. Then 90 backed slowly on to the train and, then to the delight of all, 5632 was backed up to stand alongside 90 for - as you may well imagine- the benefit of photographers. Then

Engineer Ed Renz opened the throttle and No. 90 pulled slowly away and up the long curving grade out of the yards and over the ridge to the north. (5632 meanwhile picked up a caboose which had been left there earlier and ran off on the C and S line direct to Loveland to await our arrival). There was a terrific crowd of fans at Longmont yards so we did not hurry away as we knew the roads were clogged. From here to Loveland the Great Western does not follow the section roads, many of which are dead ends, and it takes good local knowledge to chase a train. It was amusing to see the clouds of dust arising from every road we could see as the fans raced to and fro trying to keep up with the train. When we were eventually able to get out of the yards, we headed north and then east to intersect the line near Mead. The area is quite hilly and the tracks swing from curve to curve as they follow the little valleys and wind around the hills. We could see the smoke in the distance and from here on saw the train at almost every grade crossing. We just beat the train into Johnstown, which is the major junction on the line and then followed it to Officer Junction, which is reached by a very hard to find road which leaves the main road (dirt) right through a sugar beet loader and which foxed everyone but Russ. We therefore scooped all the other "chasers" here and got an exclusive view. Near Birds there was a photorun along quite a high fill- after this we paced the engine once again and were able to get excellent pictures and sounds.

We then raced ahead once again into the Loveland yards, which are the main yards of the GW and the site of their shops. We were thus able to take pictures of their two 2-8-0s (60 and 75) and other cars before the train arrived and fans covered everything in sight. I should perhaps explain that the Great Western is owned by the Great Western Sugar Co. and its main function in life is to carry the sugar beet to the mills (at Loveland, Longmont, Windsor and Eaton). This traffic is concentrated into about four hectic months from October to February. The GW own five diesels -three SW 600 and two SW1200 units) which are used to maintain the base service (the line is a common carrier) while the steamers have been maintained for the peak workings. However, in the 1962/63 campaign, it was found possible to work the entire service with diesels alone and the future of steam is black. However the 2-10-0 has recently been overhauled and will probably be kept in service for railfan specials until 1965 or 1966. So go to Colorado SOON if you want to see it ! It is normally stored at Loveland and the GW is quite friendly and will let you in the shops.

The fans were being called back to the train, and 5632 had been coupled on, when it was decided that food was a "must". We heard the train leaving while waiting for our orders and as a result completely missed seeing 5632 tackle Derby Hill just south of Loveland, and, worse, still, missed it running along the street in Longmont. In fact we didn't even see its smoke until we were nearly into Boulder, and just caught up to its tail as it stopped at the station there. We then watched it leave town but did not follow it any further, as we had decided to head for the hills.

Just before the turn of the century, a narrow gauge railroad was built west out of Boulder to serve mining areas near Ward and Nederland. This line was called the Colorado and Northwestern and later the Denver, Boulder and Western and was of the ubiquitous Colorado 3 foot gauge. It had a checkered life, making a profit occasionally but in general decaying with the mines it served. It was finally abandoned in the '20s when its last revenue- tourists-was stolen, by of all things, a fleet of Stanley Steamer buses ! (A somewhat better fate than being scuttled by diesel trucks, I would think)

Nearly all its old grade is still driveable, and one piece of its equipment survives. This is 2-8-0 No. 30, which had a varied life on the Colorado and Southern Leadville line and then was sold to the Rio Grande Southern, before being rescued at the abandonment of that line and returned to Boulder, where it is now on display in a pleasant park, together with an old RGS coach. There used to be a caboose too, but the local 'intelligensia' had a bonfire one Fourth of July-- and now theres no caboose.

After looking at this display, we drove out of town through the old D,B and W yards, now a residential area, and headed up Boulder Creek along the old grade. Some four miles out we turned to the north up Four Mile Creek which winds and winds and winds and climbs and climbs and climbs (4% was the standard grade and Shays were used for freights) This is a narrow canyon and the tracks just manage to climb as fast as the floor rises, so the grade is only feet above the rushing waters (actually honesty compells me to admit that the creek was completely dried up). The old grade has been almost completely destroyed by the county road grading but occasional loops off can be seen where the road uses the other side of the stream. This is not often however as the canyon is rarely more than 100 feet wide. Many weekend cabins have been built in this bottom section, but these do not obscure the almost continuous mining ruins--large and small. Some little 'towns' are passed - in days gone by these were thriving mining centres but now they are just clusters of cabins with an occasional store or garage. Orodell, Crisman, Salina (which still has a post office) Wall Street (where there still stands masonry walls 60 feet high- all that remains of the old stamp mill)-- these are famous names in Colorado's history. Above us on the plateau stands Gold Hill which is a genuine ghost town with a small summertime population, but we didnt visit this metropolis on this occasion. Beyond Wall Street, the cabins stop and the valley widens slightly- but all at once it comes to an abrupt end at Sunset. Here the railway split with lines running south to Eldora and north to Ward. In both cases the tracks double back along the valley, still climbing at a gruesome 4% so that they quickly rise up the sheer mountain side. We took the main line to Ward on the north side of the valley and watched entranced as Russ cautiously wound through the old curved cuts (as true railfans we blew whistle signals at all sharp corners- mostly my recordings of 5632 taken earlier in the day !!). I can truthfully say that this is the most spectacular road I have driven over- soon we were a thousand and more feet above the valley floor with the scar of the Eldora branch only a few hundred yards away across the valley. After a couple of miles we reached the loop at Mont Alto Park (where the railway built picnic grounds) - at this point the tracks reach the ridge and turn back westward toward Ward. To the east the plains were visible stretching off into Nebraska and the distant haze. We took our last glance at the Eldora line still looping along the mountainsides and continued on our way. For a while the tracks cross quite flat ground just below the timberline and then wind down around the head of Left Hand Creek, following the contours into Ward. Unfortunately this last mile or so can only be followed on foot as the dirt road heads along the ridge quite a way above the old grade, which is mostly visible below.

Eventually we reached Ward and had coffee and pie in the old Depot which still stands beside the grade but now on the opposite side from its working position. Ward is virtually another ghost town and its old and fascinating buildings are scattered along a steep track running downhill along Peck Gulch and into Spring Gulch.

After a little exploration we headed south along a very spectacular paved highway which follows the north-south watershed. We crossed the

grade of the Eldora line several times, but exact identification was difficult. We made up our minds to return again and explore the branch all the way from Sunset.

Continuing south we soon came to Rollinsville where we crossed the Moffat Tunnel line of the Denver and Rio Grande Western. We turned west along a dirt road parallel to the railway to go up Coal Creek to the East Portal. Almost at once we passed an artificial lake, alongside which was a derelict icecutting plant. This was in use until 1961 but has now been partly dismantled. The valley is deep and quite narrow, and, in true DRGW style, the tracks hug the floor of the valley. Actually this line was not built by the DRGW but by the Denver and Salt Lake, which we met in Part 1 at Craig. This was built by Dave Moffat to give Denver a direct route west in the early years of this century. The D and SL built along through Rollinsville to Tolland (about 5 miles)- just beyond this point the valley ends abruptly, and it was Moffat's plan to build a long tunnel through the mountains to the Fraser River valley beyond. To get trains running, however, a "temporary" line was built over Corona Pass, which at some 12,000 feet, was the highest point reached by standard gauge in the USA. This climbed out of the Coal Creek Canyon by means of the "Giants Ladder" which winds back and forth on the mountainside north of Tolland. From the station no less than five levels may still be seen and it must have been a wonderful sight to see several trains struggling up the grade one after another. Unfortunately, the task of keeping this line open was so severe that all the profits of the line were exhausted in the endless battle against snow, and the tunnel was not started. Eventually, in the '30s, when Denver needed more water it was arranged to build the water tunnel and one for the railway side by side and this was opened in 1936, after which time the Corona Pass was little used and was eventually removed for reuse during the war. The old grade is now open for general use, but is usually blocked by snowdrifts until well into July and again from September, so its open season is short. However it is a marvellous 38 mile drive and one I can thoroughly recommend if ever you are there.

We didn't attempt it on this occasion, but just went up the first mile or so to look down on Tolland, and then retraced our steps back to Rollinsville. We had intended to go south to the old mining towns of Blackhawk and Central City but it was getting late, so we instead returned direct to Denver along a highway which more or less parallels the Rio Grande main line. Actually, it parallels it quite closely, but is usually way above the tracks which are mostly invisible in the canyon below.

We had a pleasant evening reviewing Dells colour slides of many Colorado railways-many now abandoned.

The NRHS convention was now at an end, but a group of Eastern rail fans had arranged a final three day excursion into Southwestern Colorado to ride the narrow gauge, and we had every intention of following them! On the Tuesday morning, therefore, we did some shopping in Denver and then set off west to Golden, the site of the Colorado Railroad Museum, which we had visited briefly on the previous Friday. This contains perhaps the most spectacular collection of old equipment anywhere in the States, though our museum at Delson is bigger. It is very well set out, the stock being displayed in a spacious yard mostly built from track saved from old lines, and with a circular "main line" still under construction to provide for operation. There is also a motel on the site-- an excellent base for YOUR visit to the Denver area.

The following list details the equipment on display, and is correct to the beginning of September-- at least this is what there was there !!

NARROW GAUGE EQUIPMENT.

Gold Camp and San Juan 2-8-0 346 (DRGW class C19. Built 1881, oldest engine in Colorado. Baldwin)
 (This is museums roadname)
 DRGW 2-8-0 318 Class C18. Baldwin 1896.
 Florence and Cripple Creek 4-6-0 20 "Portland" Later sold to RGS.
 Rio Grande Southern "galloping Goose" 2. 1928 Buick motor in 1931 Pierce Arrow body-- railcar built by RGS.

RGS coach 0260 no trucks.

DRG caboose 0578.

GC and SJ Business Car "K" (DRGW Coach 4 of 1888 later owned by Uintah)
 RGS caboose 0404 built new by RGS in 1902, one of only THREE items owned by RGS that were new !!

RGS boxcar 01789 oldest freight car in Colorado (DRGW 1887)

DRGW baggage car no number no trucks.

Denver, South Park and Pacific (South Park) FOUR wheel caboose- no number and no wheels.

C and S stockcar 7064-- built by C and S in 1900.

DRGW boxcar 3272.

Typical workhorse of the narrow gauge.

F and CC boxcar 588

RGS Business car "Rico" (ex DRGW postal car 4, built 1882)

STANDARD GAUGE EQUIPMENT.

DRGW 2-8-0- 583 built by Baldwin in 1890 (was San Luis Valley Southern 106 until 1962).

Great Western comboose 100.

Denver United Tramways interurban car 25.

0-4-0 saddle tank Alco from American Oil Co. refinery at Casper, Wyoming.

Fort Collins Municipal Rly FOUR wheel Birney 22 built 1919.

CBQ 4-8-4 5629 class 05b. (presented to museum Fri. 30 Aug63.)

Colorado Midland observation car 111 built 1887, later on Midland Terminal.

(I must apologise for the somewhat haphazard arrangement of this in information-- but you should see the notes Im working from !)

Well ,after enjoying this feast of equipment, Doug and I headed southwestward in the trusty VW along US 285. After the first few miles, when it cuts over a couple of spurs, it follows the South Platte along the old South Park grade which once ran over to Gunnison and Leadville. This is a steady continuous climb through Bailey and Grant, crossing Kenosha Pass at 10001 fet and then dropping down into the beautiful South Park to Jefferson, where the old depot stands folorn at the roadside, and on a few more miles to Como. Here was the old divisional point, and lines headed north over Boreas Pass (11483 ft.) to Leadville, west across the park and eventually over Alpine Pass (11494) to Gunnison and south to nearby coal mines. Now all is gone but the old stone station, roundhouse, two old (Colorado Central) boxcars and the old grades still weather the winter storms. Como is almost a ghost town but a family lives in the old station. We talked to them and they kindly showed us inside the roundhouse (which was last used as a sawmill by an enterprising gentleman who left town about one step ahead of the sheriff) and also a museum they maintain in what was the waiting room. With all these stops, it was now 5pm and we had a long way to go. So we pressed on west, crossing the main line of the DRGW near Buena Vista, and then over Poncha Pass, with more narrow gauge grades alongside, into the San Luis Valley. From here, we ignored Alamosa, the operating headquarters of the exsisting narrowgauge, and headed west via Pagosa Springs to arrive - at 10pm- in Durango, where we had a frantic search for beds as the town was packed with railfans.

.....but more of THAT in our next instalment.....

News and Notes

The regular monthly meeting of the Rocky Mnt Branch of the CRHA will be held in the Cromdale Car Shops on Tues, Dec. 10th, at 8 pm. A slide-taped commentary on a trip to Montana will be given by Wayne Brow.

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Street Car No. 1

The car is progressing very slowly this month and the going is bound to get slower as the Christmas season approaches. The floor laying is completed except for the vestibule. The compressor bearings are also almost ready.

A note from John Guay informs us that there will be no work night the Monday before Christmas and the Monday before New Years, the 23rd and 30th of December, respectively.

Because of poor attendance on work nights and the "deadline" of July 1st, the suggestion of working on Saturdays from January to Spring has been put forward. We can think of nother nicer to do in say, February, than to help build our street car. Except maybe riding in one!

So come on fellas, lets get the project rolling so that by next spring we may stand back and admire OUR work!!

News and Notes

The Great Slave Lake Rly has reached the small village of High Level, mile 184. The village of 300 persons is located half way between Roma, the southern terminal and connection, and Hay River NWT. Residents of the town have high hopes for their community. Already, a lumber planing mil has been built and a 3225,000 hotel and commerical building will open shortly. Meanwhile, a sawmill is being built some 30 miles north of High Level at Kemp River, mile 210.

The track has now been laid two miles out of High Level and a second track gang has begun constrution futher up the line. The year end target is Meander River at mile 225 but with weather permitting, track could be laid some 40 miles beyond.

cont'd next page..

News and Notes cont'd

GSL ... The Pine Point Branch will start south of Hay River and run 55 miles east to the lead-zinc deposits at the Pine Point mine.... Here is some information on the Klondike Mines Rly.

In 1907 a railway was built from Klondike City, located across the river from Dawson City, to run some 30 miles east to the mine in the Stuart River area. The line owned two 2-8-0's and a 2-6-0 and one other engine of unknown wheel arrangement.

The line stopped operations in 1913 yet three of the engines sat at the enginehouse in Klondike City until a few years ago when, they were moved across the river on the ice of winter to Dawson City where they are now on display.

Although it is common knowledge to most of you, we would like (not really) to report that the 4th Ave or Downtown roundhouse of the CN has been dismantled. This leaves quite a gap in the yards and in fact now means that there are no longer any roundhouses in the city being used by the railways, as is.

The Calder roundhouse has of course been gone for some time and the NAR enginehouse, although not technically a roundhouse, has lost all of its stalls except for one, which is now used to over-haul diesels.

The CPR south side shops are being used by another company for storage, the turntable has been taken out and a wye fitted in over the old pit. Only one stall is used for servicing yard switchers....

Canadian National Railways have announced that since the introduction of the Red, White and Blue fare plan in the Western Region, sales have increased 31,000 a day !!

Due to an error in the layout dept. of the newsletter, a large amount of space exists on this page. Having run out of repeatable news, we are trying to waste enough space to get our readers on to page 10... Proceed, dear readers to the next page..

Notes and News, continued.

New Edmonton Transit System Bus Route.

Starting at 10.50 am. on Friday, November 22 nd., the ETS is providing a new service-- and this one is free too-- at least the passengers do not have to pay.

The route runs in a figure of eight around the University Campus and serves most of the main buildings- Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Arts, Medical, Engineering, Library- as well as the Jubilee Auditorium and Lister Hall, the new cafeteria. One bus is used to provide a ten minute interval service from 10.50 am. to 1.30 pm., Mondays to Fridays, during term time.

The purpose of the service, which is subsidized by the University, is to transport students and staff to and from the new Food Services Building (and eventually the residences, when opened) and also between the major buildings. The campus is now getting so large that such a facility is overdue --- however we had hoped for a rapid transit line or a streetcar loop !!!

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The Editor and his staff would like to take this opportunity to wish all readers a Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years.

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